

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-16 (Cancelled)

Claim 17 (New): A method for processing confidential codes in a system having secure functionalities, said secure functionalities being accessible by a predetermined confidential code comparison process accessible to said system, the method comprising:

- providing a conversion scheme that a starting code to be converted into a converted code for a user to convert their confidential code into an emergency code, said conversion scheme having a reverse conversion scheme to convert said converted code into said starting code;

- receiving a confidential code inputted by a user;

- verifying a first user entitlement by performing the comparison process on said confidential code;

- if said first user entitlement is recognized, allowing access of the user to a first secure functionality;

- if said entitlement is not recognized, converting said inputted code into an alternate code by applying said reverse conversion scheme,

- verifying a second user entitlement by performing said comparison process on said alternate confidential code,

- if said second entitlement is recognized, allowing access of the user to a second functionality which is restricted relative to said first secure functionality, without providing any information on the fact that the inputted code failed to provide entitlement.

Claim 18 (New): The method according to claim 17, wherein said conversion scheme consists in shifting by a unit a given character on the starting code.

Claim 19 (New): The method according to claim 17, wherein said second functionality comprises displaying a message on a display of the system, said message simulating a failure in a tentative access to the first secure functionality.

Claim 20 (New): The method according to claim 17, wherein said first secure functionality is a banking transaction and said system is a bank card terminal.

Claim 21 (New): The method according to claim 17, wherein said conversion scheme is variable depending on other data of said portable card.

Claim 22 (New): A system comprising:
means for inputting a confidential code;
means for accessing a predetermined confidential code comparison process for entitling the user to secure functionalities,
means for providing an inputted confidential code to said confidential code comparison process and for authorizing access to a first secure functionality if said comparison process results in entitlement,
converting means for applying to said inputted code a conversion scheme that is a reverse of a given conversion scheme that allows a user to convert his confidential code into an emergency code, so as to obtain an alternate code,
means for providing said alternate code to said comparison process and for authorizing access to a second functionality if said comparison process results in entitlement, without providing any information on the fact that the inputted code failed to provide entitlement.

Claim 23 (New): The system according to claim 22, wherein said conversion scheme includes shifting by one unit a given character of the starting code.

Claim 24 (New): The system according to claim 22, further comprising a display and means responsive to an authorization of access to the second functionality

for displaying to a user a message simulating a failure in a tentative access to the first secure functionality.

Claim 25 (New): The system according to claim 22, wherein the system is a bank card terminal.

Claim 26 (New): The system according to claim 22, wherein said confidential code comparison is performed outside said system.